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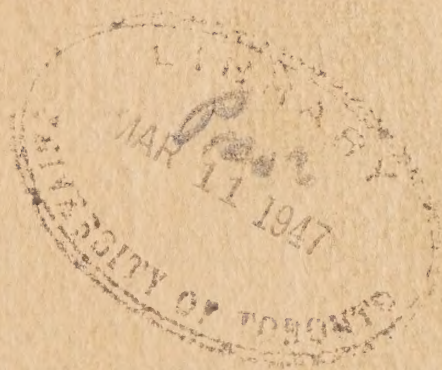
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Ontario, Education, Royal Commission on, 1946

"For Children in a Democracy"

Religious Instruction in the Public Schools of Ontario



The Jewish position, as set forth in a Brief and Supplementary Material presented to the Royal Commission on Education by Rabbi Abraham L. Feinberg, Sept. 19th, 1945, in Toronto, on behalf of The Canadian Jewish Congress, Central Division.

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FOREWORD

During the past year, religious instruction has been introduced into the public schools of Ontario at the recommendation of the Premier as head of the Government and Minister of Education. It provides for two half-hours of religious instruction per week in class rooms by the regular teaching staff and prescribes text-books prepared by the Department of Education, with the advice of an appointed committee of clergymen.

The crucial bearing of this program on the future of democracy, on minority status and the spiritual health of coming generations has been made increasingly apparent by experience, observation and study of the principles involved.

On March 12, 1944, Rabbi Abraham L. Feinberg of Holy Blossom Temple, Chairman of the Joint Public Relations Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress (Central Division) declared that the plan for religious instruction in the schools (forecast in the Speech from the Throne just a few weeks before) would be far-reaching in its dangers. Thenceforth the issue was debated by educators, the clergy and responsible leaders everywhere. The establishment of the Association for Religious Liberty, a non-sectarian body, emphasized the broad significance of Religious Instruction in the Public Schools as a potential threat to democratic institutions. Although it was feared, for a time, that this primarily-spiritual problem would be injected into politics, the question of religious instruction in the public schools has fortunately been kept free of any such involvements. Its outcome depends on enlightened public opinion and must be determined by the dignified processes of education.

With that in mind, the Canadian Jewish Congress (Central Division) entrusted its interest in the matter to a Special Committee, under the Chairmanship of Rabbi Feinberg. The importance of the issue was recognized by the active membership on this committee of Mr. A. B. Bennett, President of the Central Division. Rabbi William Drazin, of McCaul Street Synagogue, also served as Associate Chairman. In March 1945 the committee set forth a resolution expressing opposition to religious instruction in the public schools.

On September 19th, 1945, the Central Division of Congress, at the invitation of the Chairman, the Honourable Mr. Justice Hope, submitted a Brief to the Royal Commission, appointed to evaluate Ontario education. The Brief was drafted in tentative form by Mr. Louis Rosenberg, National Research Director of Congress, and then revised and edited by Rabbi Feinberg, with the sanction and suggestions of the Congress Executive and the assistance of Mr. Edward E. Gelber and Mr. A. Bennett. Rabbi H. A. Fischel, of St. Catharines, Ontario, contributed Appendix One. The entire brief, with supplementary material, was placed before the Royal Commission in open sitting by Rabbi Feinberg. Mr. Louis Rosenberg accompanied him and rendered important service. The full record of that public hearing will be made available when the proceedings are officially published by the Government.

In the meantime, the Executive of Congress has authorized publication of the Brief together with appendixes and the introductory address. This task has been undertaken by Rabbi Feinberg with the help of Mr. Maurice Gold, acting Executive Secretary of Congress, and Mr. Ben Lappin, Secretary of the Joint Public Relations Committee.

Your reading of these documents is respectfully urged.

September 26, 1945.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

by

RABBI ABRAHAM L. FEINBERG

(Delivered before Royal Commission, preliminary to presentation of Brief on Religious Instruction in the Public Schools).

On behalf of Canadian Jewish Congress (Central Division), I thank the Royal Commission on Education for the opportunity to submit this brief, which refers particularly to Religious Instruction in the Public Schools, as provided by Regulation Number 13 and its various sub-sections, as amended and introduced in 1944 and 1945. The privilege you have extended is a heartening testament to the fairness which animates your study of education in this Province. And surely nothing can be viewed as more crucial to the future than the training of today's children! The privilege also gives courage to men everywhere who have confidence in the procedures of democracy. To the Jewish community in Ontario, such a symbol of your regard for freedom of opinion brings a message of hopefulness and rejoicing.

At the same time, the opportunity you have granted us burdens us with the duty to place before you a frank, open-hearted statement of our position. Anything else would be unworthy of your generosity, and contrary to your intent.

Furthermore, we here represent the most sacred treasure and the loftiest responsibility of any spokesman — the children. Even greater than the dignity accorded by appearing before this august body, is the honor of speaking in the name of a segment of the boys and girls who attend public schools in this Province. Jewish youngsters dwell at present in 354 cities, towns, villages and rural municipalities of Ontario. (This reckoning lists Toronto, and other large centers, as one district each.) For their sake, and for what we conceive to be the ultimate well-being of the *Province*, we beg leave to present a brief.

Our attitude towards Religious Instruction in the Public Schools rests on certain basic and inescapable premises. First, religion, as taught by genuine Christianity and true Judaism, is the spiritual core of democracy; it sanctifies the dignity of *all human beings* as children of God, and the consequent inalienability of fundamental rights of *every* individual. Second, *character training* is the inescapable task of every educational instrument, including the public schools. This duty becomes supremely challenging in an age which has mastered, through the atom, the inmost secret of cosmic energy. A generation which can wield incalculable material power must itself submit to the Infinite Moral Power of God, or it will perish in self-imposed ruin.

Just *because* of these two elementary assumptions, we cannot bring ourselves to accept, without protest, Religious Instruction in the Public Schools of Ontario. Such a course in the curriculum, taught during school hours on school premises by the regular faculty with public funds, violates the separation of Church and State, which for a century has been implemented as the basis of an all-Canadian school system in Ontario and the road to the fulfilment of democracy everywhere. The sure safeguard for freedom of conscience, one of the peerless ideals preserved at such enormous cost in the recent Great War, is the *absolute division of authority between Church and State*. As Appendix Two of this brief proves, the official and recorded declarations of church bodies throughout the Anglo-Saxon world have opposed interference by the State in the teaching of religion. And when religion seeks the aid of the State, or a share in State affairs, it invites spiritual decline and subservience to the changing fortunes of politics.

Much argument has been derived from the dire fate of Nazi Germany, as a result of its moral collapse. We must recall, however, in deep humility, that many of the German youths who later swaggered in SS uniforms, and burned children and starved prisoners of war, were brought up in a *State-supported religion*. In fact, the seizure of the entire German school organization by Hitler, which was the keystone of his paganizing program, could not have been carried out if the Church had not *already* been brought into the State's orbit through the publicly-taxed school teaching of religion.

Whatever may be the majority's view on religious belief, that majority endangers the principle of *equality* when it utilizes the resources of the State to propagate its own doctrine and, at the same time, it approaches perilously close to the totalitarian method.

The public schools of Ontario hold a unique and indispensable place in our life, chiefly because therein all creeds and diverse origins can meet *on common ground*, and learn to live and work and play together. They emphasize the things that are common to us all, and foster the true amalgam of Canadianism. The teaching of religion, as set out currently, divides Canadians into a *superior grade*, consisting of those who profess a standardized creed, and an *inferior grade* obliged to uphold a different conviction.

To term such instruction "Christian" and "non-denominational" at the same time is *self-contradictory and logically untenable*. And when, as Appendix One shows with only a very few examples, the text-books contain numerous unfriendly and unauthentic references to Judaism and the Jewish people, the course will undermine brotherly love, mutual respect and neighbourly good-will among future Canadian citizens — at a critical time when these ingredients of a democracy are absolutely essential if Canada is to survive as a free, unified nation. Under the present plan of religious instruction, *the public schools cease, in effect, to be public, and become denominational*. Shall minorities be compelled to request the establishment of similar denominational state-aided schools for *themselves*? Then our school system can no longer be called "Canadian".

The non-sectarian public school is the most successful tool yet devised for preparing all people, of every grade and group, to assume the duties and prerogatives of democratic citizenship. Religious instruction, by emphasizing *differences*, cannot fail to fan the embers of intolerance wherever a minority exists. I make the assertion with profound solemnity and sadness, members of the Commission; it is founded on actual and cumulative experience and observation.

True, pupils may be excused from classroom during religious instruction upon written request. But that does not correct the injustice done inadvertently by teachers who, as Dr. W. E. Blatz, wrote "are only human", and cannot bar their personal views. Furthermore, such exemption does not prevent the psychological harm of segregation, not only to the *morale* of the *minority*, but to the *morals* of the *majority*.

The realm of religion is entirely beyond the scope of the State. If that realm is being neglected, the remedy does not lie in transference of the task to the State. It lies in a modernized, expanded, fully-supported (Christian) *church* program of child education (using the text-books now printed as a pedagogical model) and in the protection and nurture by society of the *home* as the final bulwark of religious training.

The *church* and *home* operate *vertically*; they root the child deep into the soil of his own religious tradition. The *school* functions *horizontally*, and levels the children of every faith into an equal fraternity of shared privileges and duties. The public school created a pattern of fellowship which was gloriously fulfilled in the War by the comradeship of men at arms, who saw not what a man *believed* theologically, but what he *was* under fire. Shall this pattern now be shattered?

Canada needs, desperately, the establishment of techniques whereby children of all creeds and classes may be guided to *live and labor together in harmony*. During the past years epochal advances have been made towards the perfection of programs whereby the interrelations of various segments can be tightened in the public school. The most prominent is the *Springfield Plan*, now being copied throughout the United States. A pamphlet describing it has been included in this brief, together with a copy of a book entitled "*One God*", which outlines in beautiful format the essential doctrines and practices of Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism . . .

A school dedicated to neutrality in religion is not necessarily atheistic. There are basic, God-aspiring and God-desiring ethical truths in *all* Western religions — truths which can be conveyed without violence to anyone's scruples! It is not possible for the leaders of all creeds and views to sit down together and fashion a weapon for character-building in the public schools? Our children require it, as a good example, which after all is the best form of teaching, and as the auspicious beginning of an effort to meet and match the moral crisis of our day. *We recommend that with all our hearts!*

Religion includes a creed; as a Rabbi, I regard doctrine as important. The vehicle for communicating it, however, is the *church and home*. Religion, above all, however, is not something we believe — but the manner in which we *live together*. Can this be transmitted as a specific academic class-room chore? Will the adventure of Canadian fellowship under the Fatherhood of God be produced by a class-room exercise? The chief support of this course is the fact that the police power and prestige of the *State* are behind it!

Academic classes in religion will *not* create God-centered character! If they lull children into forgetting that religion is a mode of living together, if they penalize minority children with insecurity for their religious affiliations, if they raise up barriers between the young, if they place the burden of conscience on teachers — as the recently-adopted plan of religious instruction does — such classes will help to *halt* God-centered character . . .

Religious instruction in the public school endangers Canadian unity, the infeasible equality of all citizens, the balance between Church and State, the psychological health of children, and the development of techniques for living together in a democracy. We believe that it will do more harm than good. We respectfully urge, therefore, that the regulations which made religious instruction an integral part of the school system be abolished, and that the Department of Education, in cooperation with other agencies, explore thoroughly the present methods and further possibilities of shaping moral character through the inculcation of democratic ideals in a manner *integral* to the entire school system . . .

Members of the Commission, I beg you to realize that the Jewish community asks no special privileges. Nor does it demand rights; you have shown they will be graciously and freely granted, once our situation is made clear. We have conceived it our *duty*, however, to lay before you our position and our plight. I speak to you as the voice of our precious children, the citizens of tomorrow, who look hopefully and eagerly forward to their future as citizens of this great Dominion.

After all, what is the only abiding hope for Jews? Is it not the character of Christians, and their own religious faith? Only through the strengthening of true Christian character, as we understand that noble phrase, can prejudice and bigotry be purged. What has massacred almost six million Jews in Europe if not the heathen rage of godlessness? Just because we want and need a genuine, social-minded Christian morality, patterned after the brotherhood and love of Jesus the Jew, we ask you, humbly and respectfully, to consider our plea . . . Thank you, Mr. Justice, for your courtesy.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS



Brief submitted to

The Royal Commission on Education

September 19th, 1945

Toronto

by

The Canadian Jewish Congress

- Central Division -

We gratefully welcome the opportunity offered by the public sessions of your Commission, and the invitation extended to us, together with all interested in the various aspects of this most important subject of education, to submit to you for your consideration and recommendation the following brief on Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario, with particular reference to Regulation Number 13 and its various subsections, as amended and introduced into the schools in 1944 and 1945. This brief is prepared and submitted to you on behalf of the Jewish population of Ontario by the Canadian Jewish Congress, a representative Dominion-wide organization, including within its membership all elements of the Jewish population in Canada.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

We are of the opinion that religion, especially as taught by Judaism and Christianity, is the spiritual and philosophical foundation of Democracy, because it teaches the dignity of all human beings as created in the image of God, and the inalienability of the basic rights of every individual. We believe, however, that Religious Education, to serve its purpose, must be free of influence of any kind on the part of the State. We regard the principle of the separation of Church and State as vital to the democratic way of life. We feel that any activity on the part of the Public School System which contains elements of such influence would ultimately result in the weakening of democracy, with consequent injury to the well-being of Canada.

All faiths professed by citizens of Canada should be on an equal footing before the law. Whatever may be the view of the majority of the people concerning religious belief, that majority endangers the principle of equality when it utilizes the resources of the State to propagate its own view of religion, and, at the same time, approaches perilously close to the totalitarian system.

We realize the vital importance of Religious Education. Jewish communities in Ontario, and throughout Canada as a whole, have imposed upon themselves the burden of erecting and maintaining supplementary week-day schools, in which such instruction is given to Jewish children after public school hours at the expense of the parents and the Jewish community. These supplementary schools are found in every Ontario Jewish community wherein the number of Jewish children warrants the organization and maintenance of such schools.

HOME AND CHURCH THE VEHICLES OF RELIGION

In common with fellow citizens of all faiths, we have always recognized the need to promote and intensify religious education, in the interest of the individual and of democracy. We regard this need, however, as a challenge to the Church, Synagogue and the home. The ultimate school for character-building and religious tradition, aside from organized religious institutions, is the home.

In a futile attempt to fashion some form of religious education which would be all things to all men, there has been an unfortunate tendency to seek for a "lowest common denominator", into which all religious denominations may be squeezed. This would result in a perfunctory class-room routine which must ultimately rob religion of its personal and intimate emotional content. The vertical approach of the Church, which attempts

to root the child in the soil of its own unique traditions, is far more effective, and, at the same time, permits Canadians of different creeds to believe and worship as they choose.

The Honourable George Brown, stalwart fighter in the cause of Public Schools for the Province of Ontario, said in 1858, "It is utterly impossible for the State to teach religious truth. There is no standard for truth. We cannot even agree on the meaning of words. Setting aside the injustice of forcing men to pay money for the support of what they deem religious error, it is most dangerous . . . There is no safety short of the principle that religion is a matter entirely between man and his God, and that the whole duty of the State is to secure every one in the peaceful observance of it. Anything else leads to oppression and injustice."

Jews in Canada do not ask and have never asked for any special privileges denied to Canadians of differing faith and origin. We accept the duties and obligations, and also expect the rights, to which every Canadian is entitled, regardless of creed or origin.

The Public Schools of Canada hold a unique and indispensable place in the structure of Canadian life, a position which must be strengthened and guarded if Canada is to become the great, free and happy land we all want it to be. The central importance of the Public School derives from the fact that therein all creeds and diverse origins can meet on common ground and learn to live and work and play together. It is the place where the things which unite us and are common to us all can be emphasized, and the true amalgam of Canadianism fostered.

SUPERIOR AND INFERIOR GRADES

We wish to voice our strong protest against a situation which, inadvertently, divides Canadians into a superior grade, consisting of those of a standardized creed and origin, and an inferior grade, obliged to uphold a different conviction. When such a course purports to be at once Christian, Protestant, and "Undenominational", the schools cease to be public schools, in effect, and become denominational schools. Thus, they impose upon all Canadians the alternative of withdrawing their children from such instruction, or of requesting the establishment of similar denominational state-aided schools for themselves, whose teaching shall be in conformity with their own religious belief.

Against the plea made by religious minorities, that the numerical power of dominant religious denominations should not be used to disseminate religious doctrines and interpretations in the public schools to which the religious minorities cannot consent, it has been claimed that the "majority also has rights which must be recognized."

In reply, we cannot do better than to quote from the memorial against compulsory Bible Reading in the public schools of the State of Virginia, submitted by the Baptist Churches of that State in 1926. "Protestants can claim nothing on the score of conscience that they are unwilling to concede equally to others. It is not a question of majorities, for, if the conscience of the majority is to be the standard, then there is no such thing as the right of conscience at all. It is against the power of majorities that the right of conscience is protected. This right is an indefeasible natural right of man, of which no free government can deprive him. There are some rights which even the majority cannot take away, and the right of conscience is the most sacred of these."

NOT CHRISTIAN AND NON-DENOMINATIONAL

To speak of religious education in the public schools of Ontario as Christian and undenominational at one and the same time is self-contradictory, for not only do Canadians of Jewish and other non-Christian faiths refuse to accept such teaching for their children, but some Christian denominations, Protestant and non-Protestant alike, cannot conscientiously permit their children to receive such teaching. In fact, a number have already recorded their protest.

According to the latest information furnished by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, there are at least 57 different religious creeds professed by Canadians in Ontario, a detailed list of which follows. Of these, at least 49 sects or denominations consider themselves to be Protestant. Nevertheless, they do not join the larger dominant groups.

Population of Ontario Classified According to Religious Denominations

— 1941 Census —			
United Church	1,073,425	Spiritualists	1,404*
Roman Catholics	882,369	United Brethren	1,369*
Anglicans	815,413	Christadelphians	1,364*
Presbyterians	433,708	Unitarians	1,244*
Baptists	192,915	African Methodists	1,081*
Lutherans	104,111	Mission	809*
Jews	69,217	Deists	757*
Greek Orthodox	28,383	Congregationalists	694*
Evangelical Association	24,025	Swedenborgians	597*
Mennonites	22,219	Wesleyan Methodists	417*
Pentecostal	21,053	Church of God	
Salvation Army	18,289	(New Dunkers)	422*
Church of Christ Disciples	10,055	Reformed Church	379*
Brethren	9,693	Apostolic Brethren	371*
Christian Science	8,388	Universalists	331*
Mormons	7,141	Truth	197*
Free Methodists	5,942*	Dutch Church	170
Jehovah's Witnesses	4,486*	Believers	161*
Gospel People	4,421*	Reformed Episcopal	159*
Protestants	3,156*	Theosophists	125*
Plymouth Brethren	3,186*	Saints	125*
Holiness Movement	3,185*	Independents	123*
Christian Alliance	3,043*	Nonconformists	82*
Confucians and Buddhists	2,682*	Mohammedans	55*
Adventists	2,353*	Followers of Christ	39*
Undenominationalists	1,519*	Shintoists	10*
Friends	1,602*	Moravians	8*
No religion	4,951	New Thought	7*
Others	12,591	Doukhobors	7*
Pagans	1,625*	Sikhs and Hindus	2*
		TOTAL	3,787,655

* 1931 figures. 1941 not yet available.

The Course in Religious Education introduced into the public schools of Ontario in 1944 and 1945, as outlined in the "Programme for Religious

Education in the Public Schools, 1944", is not and cannot, by its very nature, be "undenominational". It merely adds, to the 57 different credits or denominations already reported by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, a 58th denomination or creed, with its own dogma, and perhaps eventually its own distinctive name.

In the Education Act of Great Britain passed in 1870, when Mr. Cowper-Temple was Minister of the Board of Education, an attempt was made to draft a "non-sectarian" clause covering religious education in State-provided schools, a clause which did not win the approval either of the Anglican or Non-conformist Churches. Designed to eliminate sectarianism, it actually resulted in developing an additional denomination or sect, for, among the generations of children who grew up under the teaching of the so-called "Cowper-Temple" clause, many afterwards described themselves as "Cowper-Temple-ists" when asked their religious denomination.

ALL CREEDS EQUALLY INVOLVED

In April, 1931, a Committee was set up by the Government of Saskatchewan to consider the drafting of a new curriculum for use in the public schools of that province. A request was made by the representative of some Protestant denominations for an amendment to the School Act which would permit Religious Instruction to be given within the Public Schools as part of the curriculum. Other denominations, such as the Lutherans, Adventists and Jews, objected. After thorough discussion at conferences and meetings which extended over several months, Dr. John S. Huff, then Provincial Commissioner of Education, stated that the Committee had concluded it was not wise to recommend formal instruction in religion in the public schools. This, he said, was due to lack of unanimity on the part of those interested, and to the clashing attitudes of the divergent denominations. Dr. J. T. M. Anderson, at that time Premier and Minister of Education, as reported in the Regina Leader Post, stated "I shall not agree to any such action unless all the various denominations are satisfied, and, unless some agreement can be reached, I am not prepared to support the measure". Premier Anderson placed especial emphasis on the word "all", for only by the consent of all creeds and denominations would he give his approval.

It was found impossible to secure the agreement of even all the Christian denominations, as a result of which the requested introduction of Religious Education into the public school curriculum was not granted.

CHRISTIAN LEADERS OPPOSED

Dr. Alvin W. Johnson, formerly Dean of the Union Theological College, has said "Litigation, court decisions covering many phases of the question, and, in general, all the controversy that has taken place, prove that religious instruction in the public schools cannot be separated from denominational differences. Any form of sectarianism results in religious discrimination, from which our schools should be zealously protected."

The "Christian Century" in an editorial in its issue of March 19th, 1941, stated, "In a society which is characterized by a diversity of faiths and which cherishes religious liberty, it may be said that religion cannot be made an integral part of the organized life of the community, its government, its business or its system of public education. The life of the individual must be a harmonious whole . . . but to unite religion integrally

with the public institutions of the nation is something quite different. The gains (from introducing religious instruction in the public schools) seem short-term gains . . . The losses may be long-term losses — an emphasis upon religious differences in the schools, a lightening of the sense of responsibility which the churches (and synagogues) bear for education in religion . . . and the acceptance of the suzerainty of a secular school board or superintendent over the content and method of religious education.”

FOSTERS INTOLERANCE

It has been well said that few divisive influences in human society cut deeper and entail greater rancour than differences in religious belief. The public school is, and should be, our greatest unifying influence. It is the function and the glory of our public school that it is the most successful instrument yet devised for preparing people of every sect and of no sect, people of every grade and people of the most diverse nationalities, for progressive citizenship in our democracy. The obvious attention to religious differences, which religious education in the public schools will promote, cannot fail to fan the flames of intolerance in every community where a religious minority exists. The more sensitive parents are to the facts of child development, the more serious will their problem become.

In a recent statement on the relationship of Religious Education to Public Education, Mr. Harrison S. Elliott, President of the Religious Education Association (U.S.), makes the frank admission that “when it comes to the teaching of religion in the schools we have not been able to find a formula. On the whole, religion is a question which divides us . . . We have never been able to find a successful formula for religion that was not sectarian and we have never been willing to trust people of another faith to teach religion lest they might misrepresent our own faith.”

INTER-CHURCH COMMITTEE URGED CAUTION

Coming closer to home, the Inter-Church Committee on Week Day Religious Education in Ontario, in a memorandum on Religious Education in the Public Schools, submitted on April 3rd, 1945, expressed the fear that “such a plan as the Minister of Education proposes, if carried out at once, would probably cause division and discord in some of our communities, and even among Christian people themselves, since it might raise the old question of the relation of Church and State in this field.”

A group of prominent educators, clergymen, and writers of New York, including John Dewey, George S. Counts and John Haynes Holmes, referring to an attempt made in the State of New York to introduce Religious Education in the Public Schools, declared in March, 1940, that “Freedom of religion presupposes the separation of church and state. This basic principle is threatened when public school time is utilized for sectarian religious instruction and when children who take that instruction are excused from exercises that their fellow-students must attend. By accentuating the religious differences between students, the Act endangers one of the most valuable functions of the public schools. Because in them students of all religious faiths may study together without discrimination, the public schools are a potent force for the creation of tolerance and good will.”

STATE AID OF CHURCH DANGEROUS

When religion, organized or not, solicits state-aid or seeks a hand in state affairs, it is weakened by so doing, and it invites the decline of its spiritual

sanctity. This has been demonstrated in Nazi Germany. The realm of religion is entirely beyond the scope of the State. That realm may be sadly neglected, but the remedy does not lie in turning the task over to the State. It lies rather in the recognition by the home and the church of their duties, and the intensification of their efforts to carry out those duties.

The Bible is distinctly a religious book, and cannot be considered or treated merely as literature. When read by a devout person, it is an act of worship which cannot be rightfully enforced by law. Law rests on force. Religion is voluntary. When read and interpreted intelligently, it must inevitably take on the color of the religious beliefs of the teacher. Comment by the teacher cannot be avoided, even if the Bible is treated merely as literature, for in literature, as in all other school subjects, comment, discussion and interpretation are essential. Their very absence would only serve to stimulate questioning on the part of the children.

We realize that many who advocate religious education in the public schools do so because they feel that the few hours of religious education given in Sunday Schools are insufficient, the attendance inadequate, and the quality of the teaching not entirely satisfactory. But if one or more hours of religious instruction in churches or in school buildings owned and maintained by churches — given by clergymen or trained teachers of religion of the denomination to which the child belongs — are considered insufficient and unsatisfactory, what potency can there be in two periods of one half-hour each during the week, given in the public schools by a public school teacher not specially trained for this purpose — unless that potency is presumed to lie in the overwhelming prestige of the State, acting through the local public school board and its staff?

EXEMPTION CLAUSE NOT ADEQUATE

Paragraph 3 of Regulation 13, stating that “No pupil shall be required to take part in any religious exercises or be subject to any instruction in Religious Education to which objection is raised by his parent or guardian”, is, no doubt, of some value. We cannot agree, however, that it offers a satisfactory safeguard.

The provision that pupils may be excused from the classroom during religious instruction, upon written request of the parent, does not prevent or correct injustice. It subjects the children of a small minority to the embarrassment of excluding themselves from a school exercise in which others are called upon to share. The excluded child may become the object of reproach and suspicion. Such a course tends to destroy that equality of pupils which democratic law seeks to maintain and protect. Some parents, rather than expose their children to the embarrassment of segregation from their fellow pupils, may yield in silence.

MORAL DILEMMA CREATED FOR TEACHERS

As already pointed out, it is impossible for a religious-minded teacher to give “undenominational religious instruction”. No matter how hard the teacher may try, his presentation cannot help but be influenced by his own denominational background and viewpoint. This creates a most difficult situation for teachers, parents and school boards alike. Although Paragraph 4 of Regulation 13 concerning Religious Exercises and Education in the Public Schools of Ontario enables teachers to claim exemption from the teaching of religion, any teacher who cannot conscientiously undertake to

teach the course in religion as prescribed, and, therefore, notifies his employer accordingly, may prejudice his chance of securing employment or retaining his position.

The introduction of religious education into the public schools, even with the provision made in Paragraph 4 of Regulation 13, may result in the subtle and unmediated establishment of a religious test for public school teachers who wish to secure or retain employment. It may even induce teachers to conceal their opinions on this subject. That would place at a disadvantage a fully qualified Canadian public school teachers of the Baptist, Jewish, Lutheran, or any other faith whose conscience does not permit him to teach the "religious education" course as prescribed. This danger of discrimination is not altogether hypothetical. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* of July 28, 1945, under the heading "Public School Teachers Wanted" carried 53 advertisements of which 28 specified "Protestant Teacher" or asked the applicant to "state religion".

TEXT-BOOK NOT NON-SECTARIAN

We do not wish in any way to attempt an evaluation of the "orthodoxy" of the doctrines and interpretations of "non-sectarian Christian religion" as set out in the Programme for Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario, the Teachers Manual, or the books prescribed, except to state that under no circumstances can we consider them to be "non-sectarian", and that they cannot be accepted by Jewish parents. As best, it may be termed "a course in Christianity as conceived by an appointed Committee — with whom many Christian bodies and ministers do not agree — through a series of text books (not the Bible)".

We do wish, however, to register our objection to the many biased and unfriendly references to the Jewish religion and to Jewish History contained in the text-books officially approved for use in Religious Education in the public schools of Ontario. A few of these numerous references are listed in Appendix I, with proof of their inaccuracy taken from contemporary Jewish life and literature. Taught to young children who cannot differentiate between ancient events and present attitudes, and subject to the individual interpretation of teachers who are naturally influenced by the doctrines of their own religious denominations, the use of such books is not likely to strengthen brotherly love, mutual respect, and neighbourly goodwill.

Since the religious exercises are planned for use in public schools where Jewish children are also in attendance, no list of Scripture Readings can be considered non-sectarian which includes such an overwhelmingly large portion of Christological readings from the New Testament. The Old Testament is accepted by Christians and Jews alike.

BOND OF CANADIANISM WEAKENED

Summing up, we respectfully submit to the members of this Royal Commission on Education in Ontario our firm conviction that there can be no such thing as completely undenominational religious instruction acceptable to all religious groups in the public school system, and that since Canadians, exercising their right to freedom of belief and worship, are divided by differences in religious belief, the public school must be made the place where the children of all Canadians may come together, and implement their unity and equality of citizenship. The continuation of such instruc-

tion will weaken the unifying bond of Canadianism and accentuate the divisive influence of credal friction.

We, therefore, urge that the changes in the regulations concerning **Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario**, which made Religious Education an integral part of the Public School Curriculum, be rescinded in the interests of the common welfare of all our children and of a united public school system.

URGE ADOPTION OF DEMOCRATIZING TECHNIQUES

We urge that the Department of Education, in co-operation with local School Boards, teachers' organizations, Home and School Clubs, and all official and voluntary bodies and organizations interested in Education, should explore thoroughly the present methods and further possibilities of developing moral character in the pupil through the teaching of democratic ideals in a manner integral to the entire school system. In developing a sense of duty to the common welfare, a respect for truth and an appreciation of beauty, no theological faith is denied, but, since these values — goodness, truth, beauty — are no small part of religious experience, all faiths can be deepened by such a program.

SPRINGFIELD PLAN

Positive techniques, such as the Springfield plan now being utilized with remarkable results in the United States, should be adapted for public school use, in order to implant and encourage the growth of mutual understanding and respect among children of the numerous ethnic and religious groups which dwell together in Ontario. A pamphlet describing the Springfield Plan is submitted with this brief, together with an extremely stimulating book entitled "One God", which embodies in exquisite format the essential moral and spiritual doctrines and practices of Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism.

"Give us public schools that develop active interest in human welfare, passion for the basic rights of man, faith in the capacity of men for unselfishness, and the habit and purpose of co-operation — give us public schools like these, and social religion will look upon them as doing God's will."

We urge in the meantime that paragraph 5 of Regulation 13 governing **Religious Exercises and Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario** be amended by the substitution of the words "The Minister shall grant exemption" for the words "The Minister may grant exemption."

Included in this brief are also Appendix Two, which quotes the official and recorded attitudes of various Christian denominations to the interference of the State in matters of religion, and a mimeographed copy of an article by Rabbi Abraham L. Feinberg, Chairman of the Religious Education Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress, Central Division, published in the Canadian School Journal, June, 1945.

Respectfully submitted,

CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS
Central Division.

Signed:

A. B. BENNETT
President, Central Division

RABBI ABRAHAM L. FEINBERG
Chairman, Special Committee

APPENDIX ONE

STATEMENT ON THE PRESENTATION OF THE JEWISH RELIGION IN THE TEXT-BOOKS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The series **TEACHERS' GUIDE TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION** (VOLS. I-IV) is not in accordance with universally-accepted results of the most prominent historical and theological studies of the last 40 years in the following fundamental aspects:

I

According to the **Guides**, Jesus' teaching was entirely novel and superior to temporary Jewish religion. The modern view is as follows:

Jesus' teachings are the reflection of contemporary Jewish thought, both as to their religious content and their literary form. Although colored by the strong personality of Jesus and a deep religious experience on the part of his immediate followers, Gospels, Revelations, the Pauline works, and a number of Epistles still reflect, faithfully, Jewish thought and formulations.

Practically an ally of Pharisaism and other Jewish religious schools, Jesus attacks the same weakness of human nature (not of the Jews alone) and of late Hellenistic society (not Jewish society alone) which the former attack.

Even seemingly anti-Pharisaic subjects of the New Testament, such as the persecution of the Jewish prophets by their own people, the vice of hypocrisy, and the question whether man serves the Law or the Law serves man, have been favorite subjects of Jewish law-schools and pulpits of the time.

The **Guides** seem not to be acquainted with (or not to give expression to) the great classical works of the leading Christian theologians of our time, such as Strack-Billerbeck's Commentary on the New Testament from Talmud and Midrash (4500 narrowly printed pages, adducing the parallel Jewish material to every verse of the New Testament): the works of Travers-Herford, Prof. Box, Prof. Oesterle, Prof. Burkitt, (England); Prof. G. F. Moore (Harvard Univ.), Prof. Kraeling (Princeton), Prof. Goodenough (Yale): Prof. Guignebert, H. Delehaye, S. J. (France and Belgium); Prof. Dalman, Prof. Odebrecht (Sweden); Prof. Schlatter, Prof. J. Jeremias, Prof. Fiebig, Prof. Dibelius (Germany), to cite only the best-known of an innumerable host. The works of these men show clearly the origin of Jesus' religion in contemporary Jewish religion.

EXAMPLES OF MISREPRESENTATION

1. **Guide Grade II, p. 31:** "It was utterly contrary to all Jewish notions and incompatible with the supposed dignity of a Rabbi to bring babies and children to a recognized religious teacher."

The facts are: Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Huna regularly took children to school (**Talmud Kiddushin 30a**). R. Joshua ben Korha played horse and rider with his little son in the presence of the most eminent leaders of his time (**Midrash-Ps. 92.14**).

Jewish religion was child-centred. The Rabbi's considered the child closer to religious truth and sanctity than the adult (**Talm. Niddah 30b**; **Tanhuma Vayiggash 2**, etc.). The salvation of the world was believed to depend on him (**Jerusalem Talmud Hagigah 76c**; **Talmud Sabbath 119b**).

JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING CHILDREN MIRRORS THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH PRACTICE. THE GUIDE, HOWEVER, EMPHASIZES ITS NOVELTY.

2. **Guide Grade IV, p. 3:** "The four fishermen were amazed at the difference between Him and the ordinary religious teacher of their time. Jesus had a friendly word for everyone. He knew all about ordinary people's work and difficulties" . . .

The facts are: One of the great characteristics of Judaism was **Derekh Eretz**, viz., the teaching of kindness, friendliness and humanity, to be practised toward everyone, whether worthy or unworthy, whether Jew or Gentile. The glorious example for this attitude was Hillel, the venerated sage of Jewish religion (earlier than Jesus). Numerous stories concerning his kindness were current among the people (**Jer. Talm. Sab. 31a**; **Siphre Deut. No. 116**, etc.). For this reason some scholars considered him Jesus' teacher.

An abundant number of other stories show the great concern of the Rabbis for the daily worries and problems of the ordinary people (Hanina ben Dossa, Nahum of Gimzo, Joshua, Akiba, etc.). The Rabbis and Pharisees stemmed from the ordinary people and were their political and religious leaders.

JESUS' KINDNESS AND CARE FOR THE SUFFERING REFLECT THE PRACTICE OF THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF THE TIME. THE GUIDES, HOWEVER, STRESS THEIR NOVELTY.

II

The **Guides** construct an imaginary "Jewish Religion" of the time, and set Christianity in anti-thesis to this "inferior" religion, — in spite of the warnings of G. F. Moore (*Judaism*, 3 vols., Cambridge, 1927), and many others.

EXAMPLES OF MISREPRESENTATION OF JEWISH RELIGION, CONTRASTED WITH CHRISTIANITY

1. **Guide Grade II, p. 131:** . . . "character training is not taken as seriously, for in the East the customs and traditions require different moral standards. No insistence on truth or personal integrity is made."

The facts are: At the age from five to seven the Jewish child was introduced into ethical teachings of the Prophets and the Pentateuch (cp. furthermore, **Tosefta Sab. 1.12**; **Jer. Talm. Hag. 67**) The highlight of biblical ethics, viz., Lev. c. 19, belonged to his first lessons. **Kiddushin 30a** stresses the importance of the Ten Commandments for religious education.

Tanna debe Eliahu, p. 119, sums up the opinion of all earlier ages: " . . . teachers of little children, who bring forth from their hearts wisdom, understanding and discernment, and teach them to do the will of their Father who is in Heaven".

2. **Guide Grade III, p. 57:** "They (the Jews) entertained no doubt that simply because they were members of the chosen nation they would be allotted high places in the kingdom, and never suspected that any change was needed in themselves to meet Him."

The facts are: Jewish literature is full of references to the great moral and religious effort necessary to speed up the coming of the Messiah (**Jer. Talm. Taanith** 63d; **Sanhedrin** 98af.) or to acquire a "share in the World to Come" (**Siphra** 85d; **Talm. Rosh Hashanah** 16bf.; **Midr. Ps.** 106.44).

The complete inner change of man, called **Teshubah** (repentance **metanoia**) was one of the favorite subjects of Jewish literature at that time (examples in **Siphre Num.** on 27.12; **Talm. Sab.** 153a, etc.)

3. **Guide Grade III, p. 57:** "The spiritual elements of the better time were lost in their minds behind the dazzling forms of material glory".

The facts are: The frequent use of passages, such as Isaiah 11.2ff. ("the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God") and Joel 2.28 ("I will pour out my spirit on all flesh") in the literature of the period shows that the Rabbis not only expected the end of all sufferings but also definite spiritual blessings for the Messianic Age.

4. **The Guides** depict the rules of Jewish Law as trivial, burdensome, and hateful to the people (I, p. 47, IV, pp. 9, 20f., 89. etc.).

The facts are: The Pharisaic (Rabbinic or Orthodox) Laws had the tendency to protect the people (cp. Prof. Finkelstein's recent book "The Pharisees", and Travers-Herford's works). The Law was immensely popular and faithfully adhered to.

5. **Guide I, p. 56:** "Weddings and funerals seem to have been favorite games of Jewish children. The Jews were serious-minded people, and games had little place in their social life."

The facts are: The above statement is utterly absurd. The games of Jewish children are frequently mentioned in Jewish literature (**Tos. Baba Kamma** 2.2; **Midr. Ps.** 92.14; special games and attention to children **Talm. Pessahim** 109a. On games and dances of adults cp. S. Krauss' *Talmudical Archaeology*). The bloody "circenses" of the Romans were objectionable to both Christian and Jew.

6. **The Guide:** "Rules of hygiene were unknown. Sanitary conditions were appalling."

The facts are: The hygienic portions of Pentateuch and Rabbinic Law are of considerable length and utmost importance. Many Rabbis practically were physicians, and tried; just as Jesus did, "to heal and save the ignorant, shepherdless (?), suffering masses". (cp. Prof. Fiebig's collection of these stories).

III

THE GUIDES CRITICIZE JEWISH BELIEFS WITHOUT MENTIONING THAT THE VERY SAME BELIEFS WERE FUNDAMENTAL IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AND THE CHURCH.

EXAMPLES

1. **Guide Grade IV, p. 44:** "All their lives they (the Jews) had been brought up to believe that the Jews alone were God's children . . . that the only hope for other nations to share in God's blessings was to give up their own nationality, and become Jews."

The facts are: The Jewish people were perfectly justified in working for the conversion of all the nations, hoping for the day that they all would share their belief in the one God and His ethical commandments. Jesus and the Church continued this activity. They also believed "That the only hope for other nations . . . was to give up" their national religion and turn to "fulfilled" Judaism, viz., Christianity.

2. **Guide Grade III, p. 57:** "Some spoke of the Messiah as the Son of God. 'But what they chiefly expected of Him was the working of miracles. . .'"

The facts are: The narrative of the Gospels with their strong emphasis on the numerous miracles performed by Jesus, and the fantastic expectations of Revelation show that this was as much Christian as it was Jewish.

3. **Guide Grade III, p. 143:** " . . . because of the exclusiveness of the Jew all such (the Gentiles) were regarded by him with contempt".

The facts are: The teaching of the Synagogue was, "The righteous of all nations will have a share in the World to Come" (cp. the discussion on this in **Tos. Sanh. 13.2; Talm. Sanh. 99b and 105a**). Numerous touching stories in Jewish literature refer to the friendships, mutual assistance and peaceful discussions between Jew and Gentile

However, the radically or persistently wicked (whether Jew or Gentile) were condemned, just as they were in Jesus' teachings (cp. his frequent threats of eternal damnation).

4. **Guide Grade I, p. 47,** refers to the selling of sacrifices and the money-changing in the precincts of the Temple.

The facts are: Money was handled in all Churches, Sacrificial objects, such as candles, artificial limbs and pictures were sold at all places of Christian pilgrimage.

But both in the Jewish Temple — city, and the Christian sanctuary these stalls were outside the sacred precincts.

IV

FLAGRANT MISTAKES IN STATEMENTS ON JEWISH LAW

The Jewish boy becomes a "son of the Law" when 13 years old, not twelve (Grade I, p. 51).

"Circumcision took place on the eighth day, and no one dared change the day" (p. 47, Grade I). In reality, the day could be changed when the boy was weak or sick. If two boys of one mother had died previously during the ceremony, the third boy was exempted from circumcision.

EXAMPLES OF HISTORICAL INCONGRUITY

Pilate, the man "with a Roman Official's trained sense of justice (Grade IV, p. 31), was deposed by the Romans because of cruelty and injustice in connection with a persecution he had staged (A. Schlatter, *History of Israel*, 3rd ed., p. 282).

"These Jewish rulers, bent on murder . . ." (Guide IV, p. 92). This statement gives the impression that all Jewish rulers were like these. There were examples of the Hellenistic politician and tyrant of the day.

The Jewish King Agrippa II, however, protected his Christian subjects from persecution (Schlatter, *op. cit.*, p. 281) and acquitted Paul (Acts 26.31f.). The mention of the Pharisaic scribes who also acquitted Paul (Acts 23.9), of Rabban Gamaliel, who acquitted Peter and the Apostles (Acts 5. 34ff.), and of the Rabbi who was not far from the Kingdom, would have given a better picture of the "Jewish ruler".

APPENDIX TWO

ATTITUDE OF VARIOUS CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS TO THE INTERFERENCE OF THE STATE IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

United Church of Canada:

"The Church honors the authority of the State as the organ of justice, security and order within the nation but rejects any claim of the State to authority in religion and conscience". Page 131, 1942 General Council. Record of Proceedings.

Church of England:

"We give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word or of the Sacraments." "Articles of Religion", number 37.

Presbyterian Church:

"God, the supreme Lord of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under Him over the people . . . and hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence . . . of them that are good, and the punishment of evil doers . . . The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and the Sacraments, or the powers of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." (Chapt. 23 Westminster Confession of Faith.)

Baptist Church:

"The great principle underlying religious liberty to this; God alone is Lord of the conscience. To Him men must give account and only to Him . . . For its own ends the State is sovereign. But these ends do not include the religious life of the individual at all. Hence the civil and religious life of man belong to different spheres entirely." (Baptist Beliefs — E. Y. Mullins. P. 75. — "Liberty of Conscience")

Pentecostal Assemblies:

"We cannot approve of civil governments intruding into spiritual affairs which belong exclusively to the Church, as is clearly shown in such Scriptures as 1. Sam. 13:8-14 and 11 Chron. 26; 16-21.

An Appeal by Nonconformists to Nonconformists:

"Free Churchmen believe in religious equality for all. They must therefore recognize that the issue does not rest solely between themselves and the Church of England, but there are many others outside these particular communions who, as citizens and rate-payers, have a right to be considered. It is simply no use to legislate on the assumption that the community is made up of members of Christian Churches; still less can we imagine Free Churchmen arguing that non-Christians have, as such, no claim to elementary justice in matters affecting religious belief or disbelief. **Since Christians and non-Christians alike are made to contribute to the cost of education, it is surely not to be tolerated that the latter should be penalized by having to pay for a kind of instruction that runs counter to their convictions.**"

"The Free Churchmen are such because of their fundamental principle that the State has no business to meddle with the religious faith of its members . . . If the interference of the State with the religious opinions of the citizen is not to be tolerated from the Free Church point of view, how can it be tolerable that the same State should have power to frame and impose a form of religious teaching upon its citizens in the making?"

Let the State confine its activity to the secular part of education, and let parents and Churches show the reality of their religious beliefs by providing the religious part of education themselves."

Signed by the following representative leaders of the respective Free Churches in England:

W. J. Henderson, B.A., Baptist College, Bristol.

E. E. Coleman, M.A., Baptist

R. J. Campbell, M. A., Congregational

Dr. J. Warschauer, M.A., Ph.D., Congregational

Hugh Wallace, Congregational

Dr. Archibald Duff, M.A., D.D., LL.D., Congregational

Joseph Wood, Unitarian

W. Copeland Bowie, Unitarian

G. Bicheno, Primitive Methodist

John Day Thompson, Primitive Methodist

George W. King, Primitive Methodist

Silas K. Hocking, Free Methodist

Church of England:

"There is no probability of the religious, or even the Christian bodies in England coming within any measurable time to an agreement either

upon doctrine or upon practice . . . Whatever, then, may be the educational policy of the present or the future, it must take account of the permanent differences among Christians . . . It is the evident interest of the state that children whose parents belong to different religious bodies should as far as possible be educated together; for **only by such co-education can they learn in the early impressionable years of their lives to know and like one another, to see each the good in the others, and to work together for the common good.**" Very Reverend Dean Weldon, in the Times Educational Supplement.

Church of England:

"An Appeal by Churchmen to Churchmen"

"Ever since the divine command to 'Go and teach all nations' there has been laid upon the Church the obligation of providing for the religious instruction of the people. **It is an obligation which cannot be transferred to an external body like the State,** which, although it may be composed of those who profess Christianity, yet may include those who do not, and which does not in any way assume itself to be ecclesiastical. To hand over the right of imparting religious instruction to such an institution is to surrender one of the most sacred trusts committed to its share, and one which, from the first age of its existence, has ever been most jealously guarded."

Signed:

W. Busby, M.A.

C. Hallett, M.A.

George R. Hogg, M.A.

Donald Hole

D. C. Lathbury, M.A.

Bishop J. Mitchinson, D.C.L.

W. E. Moll, M.A.

Conrad Noel

and W. A. Spence, M.A.

Stewart D. Headlam, B.A., L.C.C.

George W. E. Russell, M.A.

Swelwyn Image, M.A.

Protestant Churches:

from Manifesto issued in 1913 in England by 557 ministers of Protestant Churches:

"We, the undersigned Christian clergy and ministers, desire to make clear the grounds upon which we support what is commonly known as the "Secular Solution" of the education question.

By the "Secular Solution" we mean that religion should not be taught in the public Elementary Schools in school hours nor at the public expense.

We have not arrived at this conclusion through under-rating the importance of religion in the education of our children. On the contrary, we consider it to be of paramount and vital importance, and we hold that education, in the truest sense, is impossible without it. But we hold equally strongly that **it is not the function of the state to impart such teaching.**"

NOTE

Data on the "Springfield Plan" and other instrumentalities for the promotion of mutual understanding in the Public Schools can be secured by request to the Canadian Jewish Congress, 150 Beverley Street, Toronto. The volume "ONE GOD" by Florence Mary Fitch, published by Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., New York, can be purchased through any book agency. The Congress Office will furnish information on request.

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